

Flanders Ahead, Wallonia Behind (But Catching Up): Reconstructing Communities Through Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy Making

Michiel Van Oudheusden¹ , Nathan Charlier², and Pierre Delvenne²

Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society
1–14

© The Author(s) 2019

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0270467619854327

journals.sagepub.com/home/bst



Abstract

Drawing on a documentary analysis of two socioeconomic policy programs, one Flemish (“Vlaanderen in Actie”), the other Walloon (“Marshall Plans”), and a discourse analysis of how these programs are received in one Flemish and one Francophone quality newspaper, this article illustrates how Flanders and Wallonia both seek to become top-performing knowledge-based economies (KBEs). The article discerns a number of discursive repertoires, such as “Catching up,” which policy actors draw on to legitimize or question the transformation of Flanders and Wallonia into KBEs. The “Catching up” repertoire places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global race toward knowledge, excellence, and growth, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations and fears that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors, the repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their collective futures and their regional identities. The article’s findings underline the simultaneity of, and the interplay between, globalizing forces and particularizing tendencies, as Flanders and Wallonia develop with a global KBE in region-specific ways.

Keywords

Flanders, identity, knowledge-based economy, science and technology policy, Wallonia

Introduction

What holds Belgium together as a nation? Or rather, what keeps it from falling apart into multiple cultural and regional entities? Lately, these questions have been the topic of much public debate in Belgium, due to new constitutional reforms and the intensification of a militant Flemish nationalism, among other factors. Often, such issues are perceived in excessively positive or negative terms, depending on one’s regional affiliations, politics, and loyalties to the monarchy, Belgian beer, and the national football team. What is often missing in these debates is an appreciation of how various loyalties and identities come about and how these identities are collectively rehearsed and articulated.

Acknowledging the routine and communal character of identity construction, this article explores contemporary, ongoing articulations of collective identity in Belgium. It specifically considers how collective identities (whether national, regional, or subregional) are crafted through science, technology, and innovation (STI) policies and through

mainstream media reporting on these policies. Following Anderson (1991) and building on research on the relationship between science and national identity, science and technology can actively contribute to nation building (Felt, 2013; Hecht, 1998; Jasanoff & Kim, 2009; Lim, 2001). In Belgium, STI have been, and continue to be, at the forefront of Flemish and Walloon regional development. Following constitutional reforms in the late 1970s, which relegated STI policy from the federal level to the regions and communities, Flemish policy makers mobilized STI as a lever for economic development and as a means of boosting Flemish self-awareness and pride. Flemish policy makers thereby asserted their region’s political and cultural autonomy vis-à-vis Wallonia

¹Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

²University of Liège, Liège, Belgium

Corresponding Author:

Michiel Van Oudheusden, Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Parkstraat 45 Box 3601, Leuven 3000, Belgium.

Email: michiel.vanoudheusden@kuleuven.be

and the Belgian state at large.¹ In Wallonia, talk of a Walloon identity is contentious, yet Wallonia evidently exists, both constitutionally and in popular discourse. Furthermore, several Walloon politicians are convinced regionalists, including past and present officials in charge of STI policy for the Walloon region.

Given the regionalization of an economically vital policy field like STI, as well as the potential “evaporation” of the Belgian state in the European Union (EU), we ask how Flanders and Wallonia are construed through STI government policies. We also consider how these STI policies are publicly received and circulated, as national identity must be cultivated in order to gain traction and influence (Hecht, 1998). To this end, we examine press reporting on Flemish and Walloon STI policies in one Flemish (Dutch language) and one Francophone daily.

Our analysis builds on the recognition of the role of “institutions of power” (e.g., language, media, and technologies) in articulating nationalism (Anderson, 1991, p. 163). Following Billig (1995), we locate nationalism not only at the periphery of society (e.g., among radical nationalists who operate at the societal extremes) but also in the routine symbols and habits of discourse, as when members of a community speak of “the economy,” “our nation,” and “our interests” without specifying, or even having to specify, who “we” are. Articulations of nationalism are thus often banal, implicit, and embedded. Because they are continuously and collectively rehearsed, they construct a sense of “us,” otherness, and belonging, thereby “flagging” the homeland without actually waving a flag (Billig, 1995, p. 11). By implication, nationalism, autonomism, and regionalism are for us inter-related concepts, as each implies the transformation of the state in one way or another. Whether the transferring of power (political, economic, or cultural) proceeds from the nation (i.e., Belgium) to the subentities (i.e., Flanders and Wallonia) or vice versa, is of secondary importance. What concerns us are the politics of identity and identity formation with and through STI.

As we are interested in learning how STI policies engender a sense of collective identity that the media and other important policy actors (e.g., politicians, captains of industry, and trade unions) can tap into (Lenschow & Sprungk, 2010), we take as entry points the Flemish policy program Flanders in Action (Vlaanderen in Actie [VIA]), and the two Walloon Marshall Plans (MPs).² The former, which ran from 2006 to 2014, sought to turn Flanders into a top-five economic region by 2020, in line with the EU’s 2000 Lisbon Strategy³; the latter intend to revitalize the Walloon economy along the lines of innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity. Importantly, both plans mobilize STI as strategic resources to serve an economic project.

As the two policy programs do not stand by themselves but incorporate various activities, actors, platforms, and initiatives (e.g., the Flemish Pact 2020 and the Walloon government’s “future plan” Horizon 2022, to give but two

examples), we will consider their multiple facets, as well as their history. For now, suffice it to say that the VIA and MP programs are administratively embedded in new regionalism. Contrary to regionalization, new regionalism is an official EU policy, which stimulates subnational governments to define their own regional needs and mobilize their own resources in cooperation with the national level of government and the EU. As a policy orientation, it is strongly economic, as it emphasizes income, economic growth, and employment as “strategic levers” for regional economic development (Versmessen & Delmartino 1998, p. 286). Following Jeffrey and O’Sullivan (1994, p. 4), regionalism leaves room for identity, albeit in a secular and pragmatic sense that does not amount to “an atavistic ethnic or cultural exclusiveness.” Accordingly, Keating (1992) contends that identity, when linked to regionalism, is always construed from the perspective of doing business. From the perspective of this article economic activity is also intricately linked to identity and nation or region building, as the VIA and MP plans evoke a sense of territory, enact a vision of a particular society, and address particular societal groups in an effort to turn around, strengthen, or improve “the region.” Thus, the programs construct a “we” and a “them,” as well as a desired common future. As people, place, and region are not necessarily specified in the plans themselves, they may do so implicitly rather than explicitly.

Although both the VIA plan and the MPs emphasize the need of transforming Flanders and Wallonia into knowledge-based economies (KBES) in order to meet the demands of globalization, the plans adopt a different tone and stance. The Flemish plan repeatedly states the need of “Winning the future together”; that is, of involving all Flemings so as to transform Flanders into “a top region, not only in Europe, but in the world, particularly in the social and economic field” (VIA, 2006, p. 4). It also states that Flanders is already prosperous and already has many strengths, but that the welfare and prosperity of Flanders are “under threat” in a “challenging global economic environment” (p. 2). The message is thus that Flanders is doing relatively well in the global economy, but that it must do even better if it is to maintain its competitive edge and its welfare.

As the success of VIA is partly measured against the performances of “neighboring countries” and “the growth economies of the East,” VIA posits Flanders as a distinct nation in the world with its own resources, talents, and commitments (p. 3). This nationalistic reading of the plan is confirmed in the phrase, “We are creative, we are innovative and we are a *nation of entrepreneurs*” (italics added, p. 3). By contrast, the MP is framed from the perspective of Walloon recovery and “redressement.” Although the term “Marshall Plan” evidently brings to mind the European Recovery Program for rebuilding Western Europe after World War II, recovery also refers to the period of prosperity before the World Wars, when Wallonia was one of the most economically advanced industrial regions in Europe. The MP suggests that Wallonia’s

glorious past (“le passé glorieux”) can be rewon, if the Walloons deploy every tool they can muster and work together to “relaunch” the Walloon economy (p. 3). To incite joint action, the MP urges the Walloons to become the architects of their own fate. This aspiration is clearly expressed in the opening sentence of the first MP plan: “The federalization [of Belgium; by which is meant the regionalization of policy and competences] bestows the Walloons with political autonomy, which renders them responsible for their own destiny.” This statement also reads as a call to independence, as the Walloons are *bestowed with* political autonomy by the Flemings, who have repeatedly pushed for the dismantling of Belgium as a unitary state.

As the above excerpts from the Flemish and Walloon policy plans indicate, VIA and the MPs characterize a state of political and economic affairs, take position in relation to these affairs, and, most important, envision a prosperous future for the Flemish and Walloon region, respectively. The plans are thus driven by expectations, visions, and values, as well as fears. They mobilize arguments, explanations, evaluations, descriptions, and prescriptions, sometimes by drawing on tropes or stereotypes, anecdotes, and illustrations. As the plans also indicate, transforming Flanders and Wallonia into top KBE regions does not happen by itself. For instance, while the VIA plan describes Flemings as entrepreneurs, it also states that “we must dare to be entrepreneurial” (p. 3). Similarly, the MP urges Walloon citizens to change their “état d’esprit” or mind-set, if economic growth is to ensue (p. 3). Thus, identity construction and transformation are in order both in Flanders and in Wallonia.

The above observations serve as starting points for our media analysis. As we want to know whether, and how, these particular conceptions of the nation/region are picked up in press reporting on STI policies, we ask the following inter-related questions: How are the Flemish (VIA) and Walloon STI policies (MPs) received in the Flemish and Francophone press? Do we discern in the press the same notions of identity as in the policy programs? Are these notions reproduced, problematized, or transformed? If so, in what ways? What does this mean for Flemish and Walloon identity construction, and for the construction of nationhood with, and through, science and technology policies?

Our analysis conceives of journalists and the press as policy agenda setters and opinion makers, as the press potentially reproduces and redefines political identities. As we will see, the Flemish and Francophone press speak out on issues of collective identity and also offer various policy makers a platform to express their views on regional economic development, STI, and the state. Thus, policy making is not only the prerogative of mandated policy makers, but of journalists and other opinion leaders (e.g., captains of industry) as well (Lenschow & Sprungk, 2010). Together, these elites influence public policy and policy institutions, shaping the discourses through which actors interpret, give meaning to, and make sense of the world. However, over

time, these discourses may acquire “a force of their own independently of particular actors” (Fischer, 2003, p. vii). Discourse in this sense is itself a medium of power, which no single actor controls. Instead, discourse users become properties of the discourses which they have created. In the cases presented and discussed in this article, the interpretive repertoires produced by Flemish and Walloon policy making elites, productive classes (e.g., entrepreneurs), and journalists intermingle and are woven into the larger driving force that is the KBE. It is only against this backdrop of the globalization of science, technology, and the wider knowledge economy that the presented findings can be properly understood, as the KBE both constrains and enables the development of a distinct Flemish and Walloon identity.

To enable analysis, we draw on a range of literatures, including science and technology studies (STS), discourse analysis, and media analyses. Our approach is interpretive and interactionist, as it accepts that identities and nations are socially constructed rather than exist as objective phenomenon that can be discovered through empirical testing. Hence, we ask how identity is created, structured, maintained, or conversely deconstructed, resisted, and challenged. Our aim is not to uncover an objective reality behind identity, but to understand how identities are collectively made and remade on a continuous basis.

In what follows, we first present and situate Flemish and Walloon STI policies in time and place, as a means of contextualizing the “nationalisms” inscribed in the VIA plan and MPs (Part 2). Next, we present our methodological framework for discourse and media analysis, our data, and key findings (Part 3). Upon drawing together these findings in Part 4, we single out the storyline of “Catching up” as an important discursive backdrop against which processes of collective identity construction play out through STI policy making and press reporting. The “Catching up” storyline places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global race toward knowledge, excellence, and growth, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations and/or fears that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors (including journalists, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, etc.), the repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their collective identities. We conclude by tying our findings into a broader discussion about the place of Belgium in Europe and the world, as “Belgium” is constantly redefined in terms of its constituent segments and overarching structures, including the KBE.

Winning the Future Together and Resurrecting the Region

In this section, we situate the Flemish VIA plan and the Walloon MPs in time and context. We pay particular attention to the nationalist imaginaries that are encoded in these

plans and that surround them, partly by drawing connections with broader historic events and present-day trends. For Flanders, this means going back to the launch of the so-called DIRV program, which the Flemish government launched in 1982 and which transformed Flanders into an autonomous innovation region. Contrary to Flanders, Wallonia lacks a constitutional, nation-specific technology project like DIRV that serves policy actors and others as a shared frame of reference. As we argue below, the MPs are precisely an attempt on behalf of the Walloon government to establish such a frame for Wallonia and the Walloons today.

Flanders in Action

On July 11, 2006, the then Flemish Prime Minister, Yves Leterme, and members of his government coalition launched the Flanders in Action (VIA) project, which they presented to the assembled press as a “social and economic action programme for the future of Flanders.” Leterme stressed that Flanders is doing well but not brilliantly, as Flanders is ranked among the upper-middle income European regions, rather than among the top regions. It also faces huge challenges in the areas of demography (notably, an ageing population), globalization (maintaining a competitive edge), and sustainable development.

As a way of dealing with these challenges, the Leterme government presented a range of policy measures called “VIA breakthroughs” in an attempt to make Flemings more entrepreneurial, render Flemish industries more productive, ensure mobility for all, tackle poverty, sustain economic development in an environmentally friendly manner, and streamline innovation, among others. The breakthrough projects were subsequently codified in the so-called Pact 2020, the name of which alludes to the 2020 EU Lisbon Agenda, and which all social partners (i.e., employers’ organizations and trade unions), as well as civil society organizations, officially ratified on January 20, 2009.⁴

The broad involvement of societal stakeholders is important to note, as from its inception, the VIA plan targeted the long term of policy making, and thus sought to transcend successive Flemish coalition governments. In line with this reasoning of *governing beyond term*,⁵ and also with the aim of pragmatically adjusting policies when required, the government appointed an independent monitoring committee, which regularly monitors the plan’s progress.

Both the emphasis on the long term and the establishment of a politically independent monitoring committee underline the Flemish government’s intention of sustaining VIA for years to come, as political coalitions in Flanders (and Belgium more generally) are volatile.⁶ The long-term rationale of “Winning the future together” (i.e., with all stakeholders) equally indicates that VIA is distinctly oriented toward securing a Flemish future with, and for, the Flemish people. From the onset, the Flemish government and the social partners placed a strong emphasis on regional self-assertion and development. As mentioned earlier, the VIA

plan even describes Flanders as a *nation*, which by the standards of international law it is not. In this respect, it is intriguing to note that the VIA plan does not contain explicit references to Belgium or Wallonia; instead, it expresses the ambition of “again belong[ing] to the top regions of the world”—without specifying which regions Flanders should take inspiration from (p. 11).

While the professed ambition of becoming a top region may appear inconspicuous, it can equally be read as a deliberate turning away from Wallonia. This “strong” interpretation of the VIA objective becomes more compelling when we consider that, upon the plan’s presentation in 2006, Flemish politicians, as well as journalists and observers (e.g., academics), explicitly and repeatedly stressed that Flanders should not take Wallonia as an example, but draw inspiration from top-performing EU countries and regions such as Finland and Catalonia.⁷ We turn to this point of interest again in Section 3.

To conclude this brief presentation of the VIA plan, we highlight one more element of VIA that helps us better understand its significance in Flanders today. Although VIA sought to be an inclusive, mobilizing, and transformative project for the future of Flanders, it has generally not been met with broad support and enthusiasm. To date, VIA has received a lackluster response from the general public and from various public figures, including one of the government’s very own vice ministers, who in 2011, in an accidentally leaked e-mail, claimed that “VIA is not a strong brand” because it fails to mobilize the broader Flemish public.⁸ Over the past years, several Flemish captains of industry, employers’ organizations, opposition politicians, journalists, and others, have made similar remarks, thereby discrediting the VIA initiative, as well as the Flemish government.⁹

The misgivings about VIA and the many criticisms it has elicited raise doubts about the plan’s political and economic viability, as well as its potential of forging a common future for Flanders and the Flemings. Yet the fact that VIA is publicly disputed rather than embraced does not signify an end to, or even a pause in, the ongoing process of Flemish identity formation. On the contrary, many criticisms of VIA appeal to Flanders’ recent past, and more specifically to a “we” experience that for many Flemings requires no further explanation. It is here that we turn to the DIRV action, or “Derde Industriële Revolutie Vlaanderen” (Third Industrial Revolution of Flanders), which the first Flemish executive (the initial name for the Flemish government) initiated in 1982, shortly after the establishment of the Flemish and Walloon regions. As we illustrate below, certain tenets of VIA (e.g., “the open entrepreneur,” “decisive governance,” “Flanders innovation center”) were already inscribed in the DIRV campaign.

DIRV as Founding Myth

When the first Flemish government was installed in the 1980s, it sought to boost Flemish economic self-awareness

and position Flanders as an industrial, entrepreneurial high-tech region (Oosterlynck, 2006). Whereas prior to World War II, Wallonia had economically outperformed Flanders, the balance gradually shifted in the late 1950s, with the decline of Wallonia's "old" coal and iron industries. A determining figure in transforming Flanders into a new, invigorated economy after the economic crisis of the 1970s was the then chair of the Flemish government, Gaston Geens, who in 1982 launched DIRV, shorthand for "Derde Industriële Revolutie Vlaanderen" (literally *Third Industrial Revolution Flanders*). Through this program, Geens sought to reform the Flemish region economically and establish its independence. Geens therefore presented DIRV as an offensive policy to create new products, production methods, and markets for industries of the future (see, e.g., Vlaamse Raad, 1983a, 1983b). He further stressed that it was the government's task to stimulate innovation in new technologies, while entrepreneurs and industries designed concrete projects in partnership with research institutes, universities, and private companies.

The effects of DIRV on innovation policy and practice are palpable, as the program lent support to various technologies, including the highly promising fields of biotechnology, new materials, and microelectronics. Equally important, DIRV delivered a decisive break with economic pessimism in Flanders. As Oosterlynck (2006) writes, although DIRV was an institutional policy effort, it was "primarily a campaign to raise awareness and promote new technologies and innovation" (p. 101). To spur public attention for the program, Geens established the so-called technology days (T-days) for each of the designated technologies, with the aim of mobilizing industrial and research support. A similar effort was made to attract domestic and foreign investors through the so-called project days or P-days, and an international fair by the name of Flanders Technology International, which drew in large crowds.

DIRV can hence be seen as a keystone not just in instigating contemporary innovation policy in Flanders, but in the construction of Flanders as a modern-day high-tech innovation region. Following Goorden (2004), the DIRV action constructed Flemish socioeconomic policy and a Flemish national identity and polity. Through DIRV, the Flemish government presented "a clear image of itself to the general public, with an offensive policy of its own, distinct from both Walloon policy and national policy" (p. 8).

We do not further expound on the DIRV campaign in this article. As we illustrate in Section 3, DIRV is, and remains, a key reference point in the development of STI policies, including VIA. Given its pervasiveness and the way it is reclaimed by policy actors today, including entrepreneurs, journalists, and even Flemish science museums, it is not an exaggeration to say that DIRV serves as a constitutional moment and foundational myth for the development of a Flemish nationalist imagination.¹⁰

Wallonia's Resurrection

In Wallonia, there is no founding myth such as DIRV on which policy actors can collectively draw. However, the long-term history of the Walloon region plays an important role in the construction of an STI imaginary. Wallonia is often narrated with references to its glorious industrial past; that is, to the First Industrial Revolution, when Wallonia took an advance in coal mining and steel production (Quévit, 1978). Along with England and other regions, Wallonia was one of the key economic players in the world for decades. However, World War II destructions and the restructuring of the economy toward secondary and tertiary sectors put an end to the region's growth and economic supremacy. Industrial decline hit Wallonia hard from the 1960s onward, while Flanders modernized its economy and workforce, and drew in foreign investment. There are implicit and explicit references to Wallonia's great past when the word "recovery" is used. Wallonia must recover from a long, deep crisis (illness) and catch up with the rest of the world to secure a legitimate place in the global economic order.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the government made remarkable attempts to raise Walloon economic self-consciousness, with the "Deal for the Future of Wallonia" (*Contrat d'Avenir pour la Wallonie*). It was the first future-oriented Walloon policy program that sought to integrate social welfare and economic concerns. The deal was prolonged until 2005; however, it took the form first and foremost of a political declaration, without means and operational goals and target. In 2005, a failed attempt to reform the federal state rekindled political tensions related to the Flemish drive for independence, and a controversy ensued about the state of the Walloon economy (Accaputo, Bayenet, & Pagano, 2006). The Walloon majority used these arguments to justify the need for a Marshall Plan for Wallonia that mobilizes human capital, builds competitiveness clusters, and taps into scientific research to pave the way for a better future (*L'Echo*, 11.07.2005).

The plan was presented in August 2005 as a large policy program to promote regional economic growth, entrepreneurship, and the creation of jobs via innovation and university-industry partnerships. Initially called "priority actions' plan for the Walloon future," it followed and aggregated diverse other plans, while a strong effort was made to promote it. The plan was quickly presented as the core of governmental action. Explicit in the plan is the will of policy makers to fully and strategically handle the regional-level political competences and resources. The program, mobilizing more than one billion Euro for a period of 4 years, had five axes and several specific operational targets: creating five competitiveness clusters (and a sixth in 2009), stimulating economic activities' creation, reducing business taxation, supporting research and innovation, and improving work training and the overall employment rate.

The narrative purported in the MP is that Wallonia faces severe industrial decline. Prompted by the Flemish demand for additional constitutional reforms and external forces, Wallonia has no choice but to regain control of its own destiny; that is, to become “the architect of its own fate” (to use the weighty term of actors on the terrain). To build a better future for itself, Walloons must muster every tool they have and enlist every stakeholder within a mobilizing and inspiring, future-oriented project. Economic recovery should bear on innovation and incite industry-university partnerships with the aim of becoming a “European Knowledge Society/Economy.”

The powerful metaphor “MP” and the suggestion of a general mobilization decree a state of war and a call to action. This is reinforced through the use of several autostereotypes that describe Walloon economic culture, including a strike-prone workforce, high-unemployment rates, a lack of entrepreneurship, and a state-provider mentality. The plan calls for a “rupture” with this culture to create a new collective “état d’esprit” or state of mind centered on enterprise, audacity, and creativity.

Media and Discourse Analysis

As mentioned at the outset, this article adopts a broad understanding of both nationalism and policy making. In line with Anderson (1991) and Billig (1995), among others, we conceive of nationalism as the collective construction of identity at the heart of society and at the center of policy making through everyday social rehearsals. By the same token, policy making is not the prerogative of mandated policy makers, as journalists and other institutions of power also inform and craft policies, for instance, by setting and framing political agendas (Kingdon, 1995). The media, in particular, as bearers of meaning and opinion leaders, give credence to certain policies rather than to others. They also give voice to particular actors and open a space for debate and criticism. As such, they potentially transform and reshape collective identities rather than simply reproduce dominant meanings.¹¹

Our broad conceptualizations enable us to locate nationalism and policy making in a diversity of practices and discourses. For practical reasons and from a concern with ensuring the reliability and transparency of our findings and interpretations, we bound the potentially limitless reach of data to include press coverage of STI policies in two of Belgium’s leading newspapers. Rather than striving to provide an exhaustive and representative media analysis, we intentionally sample for heterogeneity. We hence look for variations within a delimited data set, such as contradictions, ambiguities, and possible shifts or changes in text and talk, with due consideration for how text and talk are flexibly interpreted and used.

Data Selection

Our selection draws on two newspapers that dominate the Flemish and Francophone market for “quality news,” and

which each belong to a different media group.¹² *De Standaard* is a Flemish, historically pro-Catholic newspaper. Until the 1990s, *De Standaard* was considered a Christian-Democratic paper, associated with the Christian-Democratic party. The newspaper is also historically pro-Flemish, as it was sympathetic toward the Flemish independence movement. Today, the paper is considered center-right. *La Libre Belgique* is a Francophone daily. It is historically pro-Catholic and pro-Belgium (as the title of the newspaper indicates). Due to its catholic roots and its circulation among the Francophone elites in Belgium, *La Libre* is sometimes described as the Francophone counterpart to *De Standaard*.¹³ Using the Flemish media search engine Mediargus and the Francophone Press Banking (which are the equivalents of Lexis/Nexis in other parts of the world), we searched *De Standaard* and *La Libre* for articles on the VIA plan and the MPs. Our search covers the following period: from August 30, 2005, when the first MP was launched and publicly presented, to August 30, 2013, with the MPs’ seventh anniversary date. As the VIA plan was first made public on July 11, 2006, the chosen time period also covers press reporting on VIA both in *De Standaard* and *La Libre Belgique*. Our search generated a total of 102 articles in *De Standaard* and 175 in *La Libre Belgique*.¹⁴

Sensitizing Concepts

To orient our analytical gaze and to develop our own “arts of combining” analytical tools and research questions (Keller, 2005), we employ three sensitizing concepts (van den Hoonaard, 1997) found in constructionist studies of discourse: *discourse*, *storyline*, and *interpretive repertoire*. Each of these concepts is briefly situated and explained below.

A discourse can be defined as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities” (Hajer, 1995, p. 60). Following Phillips and Jorgensen (2002), discourses amount to the larger circulation of patterns of meaning in society; that is, they play out at the macro level of social order, as they construct people’s lived realities. Discourses do not stand by themselves, however; they are continuously (re)constructed through social action, social organization, and relations of power. They are also tied up with various materialities (e.g., physical substances, practical instantiations of ideas and concepts, technologies, etc.), which both constrain and enable their existence, adoption, and circulation.

In the study presented in this article, the KBE constitutes a principal discourse, which shapes identities, social relations, and understandings of the contemporary world. To the extent that the KBE has been unequivocally advanced by global policy institutes such as the Organization for Economic Development, the G7/8, the International Monetary Fund, as well as the EU, it is essentially a legitimization discourse

urging countries and regions to foster innovation for the sake of economic and social growth. The underlying idea of the KBE is (seemingly endless) growth accumulation, as nations and regions innovate and compete to improve their economies and social welfare (Claisse & Delvenne, 2017). We return to the KBE in the next section, as it structures the environment of STI policy making that we are studying.

As we not only want to know which discourses circulate, but how they are enacted and potentially transformed, we draw on the discourse tradition of discursive psychology to analyze the communicative interplay between discourse (macro level) and the meaning production occurring in specific, situated contexts (meso and micro levels). The notion of interpretive repertoire is of use here, as it links the ideological and historical formations with situated practices (Billig, 1995; Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Following McKenzie (2005), a repertoire constitutes the interpretative codes (words, categories, metaphors, heuristics, etc.) that are available to members of an interpretive community. Repertoires hence offer people the means to understand and make sense of reality.

Repertoires can be linked to storylines, which capture a discourse in a shorthand form using key metaphors or other rhetorical devices that figure in the discourse, such as tropes, stereotypes, and frames of reference. Hajer (2005, p. 301) contends that when carrying out a discourse analysis, “one quickly realises that in any field there are a couple of such stories, which fulfill an especially important role.” Like repertoires, the storylines provide ready-to-use interpretations to make sense of the world (Fischer, 2003). They are flexible in that they allow actors to interpret individual cases differently, and define them in accordance with their own interests and needs. Accordingly, storylines are not confined to any one organization or government actor, but are shared by the national and local players involved, and by the academic community, professions, the media, and others impacted on by the policy activity (Hewitt, 2009).

In discourse theory, the difference between repertoires and storylines is not always clear, as both terms are used differently by different authors and some authors even use them interchangeably. For our purposes, repertoires accommodate a multitude of perspectives and appreciations (possibly concealing differences and differentiation), whereas storylines activate particular interpretations and actions, for instance, through the attribution of responsibilities and obligations. Thus, storylines draw out inconsistencies and oppositions between competing views, thereby urging actors to take position. The difference between the two concepts is illustrated in the next section, when we draw out competing appreciations of the repertoire of “Can do,” among others.

In short, we conceive of discourse as the symbolic and material structuring of the world. Storylines and repertoires constitute the discourse by condensing it to one or a few of its key elements that make for easy interpretation and use. Metaphors, tropes, stereotypes, and other rhetorical figures

and narrative elements serve as discursive building blocks that together constitute the larger patterns of meaning. Importantly, through discourse, different versions of selves and reality are built and rebuilt (Tuominen, Talja, & Savolainen, 2002). In the following section, we ask which selves and which realities are constituted through Flemish and Francophone press reporting on STI policies.

From “Can Do” to “Rupture” and “Catching Up”

As should be clear by now, both the VIA plan and the MPs subscribe to the KBE (as the KBE is presented in the EU’s Lisbon Agenda, among other foundational sources). However, for Flanders and Wallonia to transform into full-fledged KBEs, a major changeover is deemed necessary. This explains why the Flemish and Walloon governments urge Flemish and Walloon policy and societal actors (administrations, captains of industry, entrepreneurs, scientists and academics, nongovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, citizens, and others) to take the necessary decisions and measures to convert Flanders and Wallonia into KBEs.

By insisting on transformation and (continuous) adaption, the VIA plan and the MPs enact a transition repertoire that opens to a more prosperous communal future. Although this repertoire is not unique to Flanders and Wallonia, it is locally enacted and appropriated through region-specific discourses (e.g., “Flanders in Action” and “Winning the future together”) and tools and practices, such as the “transition method,” which the Flemish government propagates as a means of mobilizing all Flemings without exception. Through transition, it is hoped that Flemings (and Walloons, through the MPs) will become more entrepreneurial, more creative, and more open toward the world (VIA: 2-4; MP: 3). Seen in these ways, “transition” implies continuous improvement and growth, as well as hope of a better future; that is, a joint future that is prosperous, social, and sustainable.

We underline the importance of transition as it is inscribed in the VIA plan and the MPs, as it is only against the backdrop of KBE-oriented transformation that our data can be properly understood. As we illustrate below, Flemish and Walloon policy actors mobilize a range of repertoires and storylines that position Flanders and Wallonia in relation to other regions and countries, and to one another. This observation is not surprising, as in a KBE constellation constant comparison takes place between national and regional economies. These comparisons may be explicit, as when national economies are ranked on a socioeconomic performance scale, or implicit, as, for instance, when the Flemish Minister posits that Flanders should only take inspiration from “top EU regions” (to which Wallonia does not belong, and therefore does not even warrant mentioning; *De Standaard*, 11.07.2007). The comparisons can also be self-referential, as when Flemish policy actors conjure up the

Flemish DIRV campaign or Walloon actors invoke Wallonia's glorious past ("le passé glorieux"). Our data suggest that these pasts tend to be communal rather than national (i.e., Flemish or Walloon rather than Belgian) when actors talk about VIA or the MPs. One of the points we hence wish to explore is how the KBE serves actors as a discursive resource to (re)construct their collective identities.

Across the examined time period, we find countless examples of how the transition repertoire is reproduced in *De Standaard* and *La Libre Belgique*. In the vast majority of articles, change and transition are embraced and propagated, if not celebrated, through phrases such as "building a new economy," "Gazellesprong" (leaping to the future through the stimulation of entrepreneurship), and "putting Flanders on the map (again) through innovation." In *La Libre Belgique*, actors recurrently speak of "La Wallonie qui gagne" and present Wallonia as an economic "miracle." However, various actors equally express doubts about transition and change, giving rise to darker images of "decline," "stagnation," "catastrophe," and "urgency," both in *De Standaard* and *La Libre Belgique*. Messages of hope and despair may also overlap. It is here that the storyline of "Can do" emerges in *De Standaard* specifically.

Can Do

"Can do" is a catchphrase deployed by policy actors (notably Flemish entrepreneurs) in *De Standaard*, typically in relation to the public presentation and implementation of VIA. It can be read as a message of hope and reassurance and as a call to action (Flanders can do better), as well as a message of despair (Flanders *cannot* do better). The following two excerpts illustrate how "Can do" is articulated through talk of Flemish entrepreneurialism and dynamism.

I've been wanting to do business in Flanders for a long time now. But I don't see opportunities. Too many rules and regulations. It's also much too expensive. There is no "can do" mentality. In the US, it takes 48 hours to start up a business. In Flanders, one feels discouraged even before having begun. There is not enough dynamism.¹⁵—"Bescheidenheid brengt je hier nergens" (27.06.2012)

Look at the DIRV action twenty years ago, the renowned Third Industrial Revolution Flanders. Back then, the Flemish government had a much smaller budget than today. But didn't DIRV have an impact? Back then there was a conviction among Flemings that *Yes, we can*. That spirit no longer exists. It's pointless to complain about the worsening of our economy.¹⁶—"Vlaamse economie 'can do.'" (09.10.2010)

The first excerpt is taken from an interview with a successful Flemish expat residing in New York, on the occasion of a "Flanders promotion trip" of the Flemish Minister President to the United States. By contrasting the Prime Minister's presentation of Flanders as a "rich, assertive

region" with the testimonies of "first-class" ("top" in Dutch) Flemish entrepreneurs in the United States, the article questions the "can do mentality" of the Flemings. Flemings, it is suggested, are not entrepreneurial enough and Flanders as a whole lacks "dynamism." The article raises doubts about "Flanders in Action" and the Prime Minister's mission of promoting the VIA project and Flanders abroad.

In the second excerpt, taken from an interview with the former head of the Flemish employers' organization VOKA, the tone is despairing, but arguably less so than in the first excerpt. The interviewee recalls the DIRV campaign, arguing that it was once possible to create policy "impact" despite smaller policy budgets. As mentioned earlier, in Flanders, the 1982 DIRV action is generally conceived of as a highly successful technology-push policy that inspired and mobilized "the Flemings." The interviewee appears to draw on DIRV as a means of reassuring the readers of *De Standaard* that change is possible and that "not everything is lost" ("niet alles is om zeep"), as stated in the article's heading.

These examples suggest how "Can do" alludes to the possible, as it incorporates a message of reassurance and hope, which in turn can be read as an incitement to joint action. At the same time, "Can do" evokes a message of despair and doubt about whether change in Flanders is even possible, as Flemings may not be entrepreneurial enough. Depending on their aims and outlook, actors may choose to emphasize the first or second reading.

Rupture

In line with the MP, most of the articles in *La Libre Belgique* endorse a discourse of rupture. Rupture implies a break with the past, but can the MP stimulate a changeover that puts Wallonia on the road to recovery? Furthermore, what needs to be changed?

An interview with Michel Quévit (*La Libre Belgique*, 08.09.2005), a renowned academic in Wallonia and expert of innovation policies and regional development, renders this "rupture" repertoire explicit. In the interview, explicit references are made to Wallonia's past, and specifically to the idea of industrial decline between the 1950s and the late 1980s. For Quévit, the recent past, since the 1980s, is characterized by stagnation. When talking about a "harsh decline," an implicit reference is made to a "glorious past"; that is, a time period when Wallonia was at the forefront of industry before World War II. Subsequently, Quévit is invited by the interviewer to give his thoughts on the new MP. He is enthusiastic about the Plan, arguing that it heralds a change in the way the Walloon government appreciates entrepreneurship. The present government embraces entrepreneurship as a motor for economic development.

However, Quévit also raises concerns. Upon comparing Wallonia to other regions such as the United States, he points out the problem of education and fundamental research that are not taken into account in the MP. This, in turn, is related

to the idea of changing Walloon mentalities and the Walloon mind-set, as indicated in the following excerpt.

I want to believe in the Plan. Then, he states that his concerns are stronger for what “stands on the side of the plan: education, and the cultural problem of mentalities.” That is to say? “We, in Wallonia, got used to be stuck in a logic of acquisition rather than responsibility.” A culture defined by “What can I get” rather than by “what do I bring.” It is related to a very harsh decline¹⁷—“Une histoire wallonne selon Quévit” (08.09.2005, p. 18)

In a follow-up interview with the same journalist, Quévit is still skeptical about the rupture induced by the MP:

It is false to state that Wallonia hasn’t done anything. But it has done too little, too slowly, and many things remain to be done. I think first and foremost of learning, developing creativity. The PISA report is disturbing. Creativity must become a priority.¹⁸ (10.02.2007, p. 5)

For Quévit, as for other interviewees and columnists who draw on the rupture repertoire, the MP does not suffice to deal with the problems of Wallonia, the reform should be deeper and tackle many more aspects related to cultural aspects, to a mind-set, for instance, by integrating education into the MP. The rupture discourses build on references to the past (the “glorious past” before World War II, and the “ugly past,” between the 1950s and present), and insist on the importance of eliminating unhelpful attitudes and bad habits that affect the Walloon economy negatively and hinder the development of a creative, entrepreneurial society.

As with “Can do” in *De Standaard*, the skeptical discourses about rupture are tempered with more positive, or hopeful, overtones. In such instances, the MP is considered to be “working well,” as there is evidence to suggest that the region is moving forward. This new trend is recognized by international investors such as Google and Microsoft, who in recent years have located businesses in Wallonia, and the region is even taken as an example for its dynamic program for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Another good point for fast developing Wallonia. It is one of the two invited regions (with California) at the World Investment Conference [. . .] This nice platform given to Wallonia is the result of the multiple actions implemented by the government to set a virtuous circle of development.¹⁹ (22.05.2008, p. 33)

Whereas the “Can do” and “Rupture” repertoires are more or less specific to *De Standaard* and *La Libre* in that they are essentially about Flanders and about Wallonia, other repertoires explicitly relate the two regions (and communities). Below, we single out two such interregional repertoires.

Wallonisation

When the VIA plan was launched and presented in 2006, Flemish politicians, as well as journalists, publicly stated that

Flanders should not compare itself with Wallonia, but only to top EU nations and regions like Finland, the Scandinavian countries, Catalonia, Scotland, and the Netherlands. This is because at the time Wallonia was considered to be an economically underdeveloped region far behind Flanders; hence, the region went unmentioned in the VIA plan (*De Standaard*, 11.07.2007). However, in *De Standaard* this narrative changes toward the end of 2009, shortly after the Walloon government highlighted the positive results of the first MP on the Walloon economy.²⁰ A few months later, a Flemish economist and opinion leader by the name of Geert Noels wrote an editorial in *De Standaard* in which he warned of the “Wallonisation” of Flanders. By “Wallonisation,” Noels meant that Flanders risked becoming more like the Wallonia of old, because of rising unemployment levels and the growing role of the Flemish state in the economy. He also argued that Flemings dislike entrepreneurship and show a lack of initiative, whereas Wallonia today shows signs of economic revival and ambition. Noels based his claims on a socioeconomic study on Wallonia, which he had conducted for his economic think tank Econopolis.

Noels’s warning did not go unnoticed. The term quickly gained traction in other Flemish media and in policy making circles, as well as in certain Walloon media outlets. Although “Wallonisation” acquired an explicitly negative connotation and received much criticism in Wallonia, Noels later claimed that he had not just meant to warn against “complacency” and “economic stagnation” in Flanders, but had also meant to praise Wallonia for its dynamism (*De Standaard*, 05.02.2010).

However one understands “Wallonisation,” policy actors in Flanders drew on the term to call for less self-contentment on behalf of the Flemings and for immediate action on behalf of the Flemish government to relaunch the Flemish economy. For instance, a former rector of the University of Leuven asserted that, “We [Flemings] do well, but I would prefer if we were less self-satisfied with ourselves. . . . We can and must do much better” (*De Standaard*, 04.02.2010). Thus, similar to “Can do,” “Wallonisation” served actors as a resource to spur collective action in Flanders.

It is intriguing to note that through incidents such as “Wallonisation,” Wallonia and the MPs re-emerge more explicitly in *De Standaard*’s reporting on VIA. Whereas prior to 2009, Wallonia was not mentioned at all in articles relating to VIA, we find 14 explicit references to the MPs after the Wallonisation incident, as well as explicit comparisons between VIA and the MPs. Whether the incident actually sparked renewed attention for Wallonia and its socioeconomic policies in *De Standaard* is hard to say. “Wallonisation” does however appear to have unfolded with the repertoire of “Catching up,” to which we now turn.

Catching Up

“Catching up” is the most pronounced repertoire in our data set. It is mobilized by all actors on both sides of the linguistic

border. It suggests that Wallonia will, in due time, outperform Flanders, due both to a slowdown in the growth of the Flemish economy and relatively higher growth performance in Wallonia. As such, it places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global race toward knowledge, excellence, and growth, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations and fears that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors (including journalists, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, etc.), the repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their collective identities. The example of “Wallonisation,” above, serves as one, significant, indication of how “Catching up” plays out in *De Standaard*.

Let us now consider some instances of how the repertoire is deployed in *La Libre*. There are countless examples that implicitly or explicitly compare the Flemish and Walloon policy programs, as the following excerpt indicates.

And the boss of the regional foreign trade agency underlines the innovation and partnership’s capacities that the Marshall Plan 2.green made possible. Ernst & Young praises its excellence. “Even in Flanders you can hear about it,” says Herwig Joosten (E&Y). The Marshall Plan is doing better than Flanders in Action. ViA is too complex, and the basis for fiscal deduction in patenting activities isn’t broad enough.²¹ (06.06.2013, p. 31)

Based on a comparative review of Flemish and Walloon GDP over a 10-year period (2003-2013), an economist gives his view of where Wallonia stands in relation to Flanders, as follows.

The Walloon Miracle? Not quite yet. Wallonia will overtake Flanders . . . in 2087. 75 years will be necessary for the Walloon GDP pro capita to surpass Flanders if nothing changes. However, the Walloon government has implemented good policies.²² (16.05.2013)

In this excerpt, skepticism and optimism are jointly articulated, suggesting that Wallonia is on the road of recovery but, as mentioned elsewhere in the article and recognized by other actors such as the Walloon employers’ organization, UWE, “the road is still long.”

The same organization also cautions against comparing Flanders to Wallonia, arguing that Wallonia must recover for its own sake, not for Flanders or for Belgium.

Let’s stop comparing Wallonia to Flanders. The goal of the Walloon recovery is not to reach the level of Flanders. The goal is full employment, turning back to prosperity; undertaking the [political, economic, fiscal] autonomy that will be ours in the next few years.²³ (16.05.2013)

This assertion is noteworthy, as it provides a rare counter-narrative to *Catching Up* and contradicts the first sentence in the 2005 MP, which explicitly states that Wallonia would do

well to develop its own growth path to avoid that Flanders demands even more constitutional state reforms.

Catching Up in the Global KBE

To render the above observations more tangible, we outline the rationale of the KBE and the discerned repertoires in the following graph (Figure 1), based on our interpretations of actors’ accounts in the newspapers that we analyzed.

The graph plots the performance of Flanders and Wallonia as KBE regions (vertical axis) over time (horizontal axis). The variable “KBE performance” encompasses the key features of the KBE, such as innovation, growth, and excellence. If we were to imagine a vertical line in the middle, this line would indicate the contemporary moment, where possible futures for Flanders and Wallonia are realized. The curves on the right side of the separation line project these possible futures; that is, they indicate how Flanders and Wallonia *could* perform socioeconomically in the years to come. It is here that we encounter the repertoires and storylines chosen for this section (e.g., “Can do,” “Rupture,” “Catching up”). Flemish and Walloon performance are measured against one another, as well as against the top EU regions, which at present outperform both Flanders and Wallonia (the gradually ascending line).

We conclude this section by again emphasizing that the discerned repertoires must be understood within a global KBE narrative, which urges regions and countries to compete against, and compare themselves with, one another. In Belgium, the KBE opens a discursive space for “Catching up,” which projects a past in which Wallonia was economically ahead of Flanders and a future in which Flanders is eventually surpassed by Wallonia. To the extent that this scenario arouses fears, worries, hope, or excitement among policy makers, it serves them as a means of inciting collective action in ways that implicitly or explicitly redefine “Flanders” and “Wallonia.” From this analysis, we learn that, whereas the pressures of globalization are tangible in both regions, responses to these pressures differ. The difference resides not so much in how Flanders and Wallonia engage with the demands of increasingly global trade in goods and services, technology, flows of investment, and information (although there are of course distinctions to be made), but in how each region projects *its own* distinct collective socioeconomic future. As Karl Deutsch (1966) has argued, collective identity—whether built on shared economic interests, values, language or culture—has to be sustained by flows of communication between insiders, or interlocutors who communicate more frequently and on more issues with one another than with outsiders (Fletcher, 1998). Belgium, in this sense, qualifies as a state rather than a nation, with mainstream (and other) media starkly divided along linguistic and cultural lines. New demands for more “regionalization,” increasingly heard on both sides of the linguistic border, are prone to strengthening this foundational divide, particularly

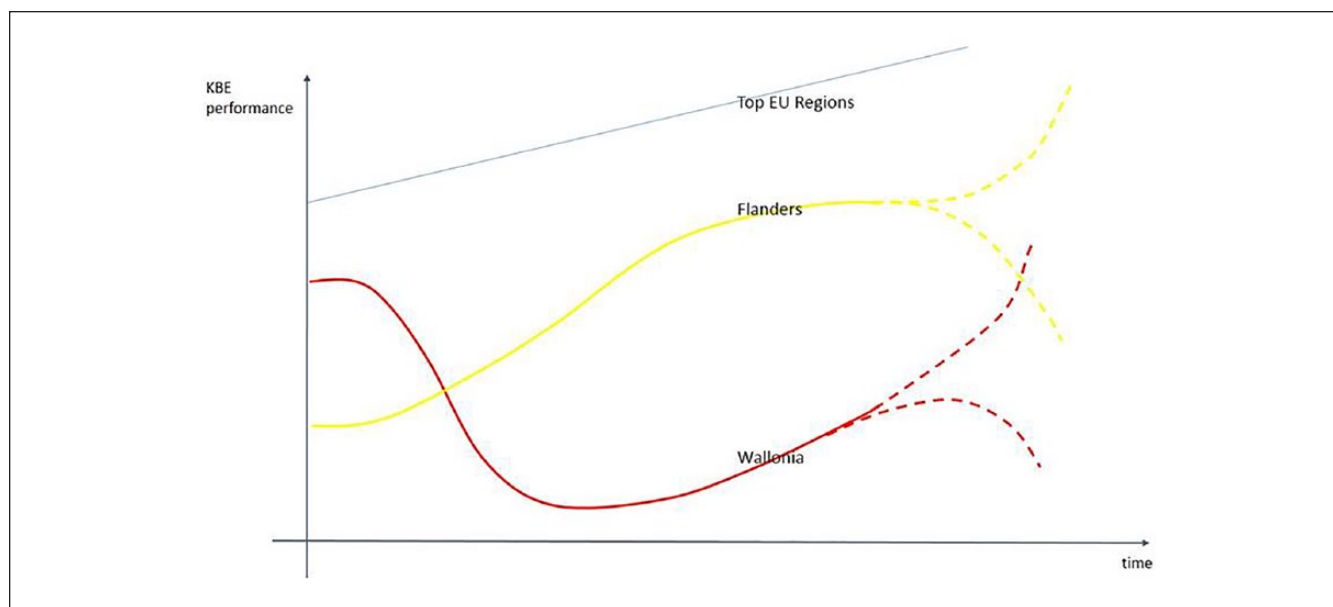


Figure 1. Performance of Flanders and Wallonia in the knowledge-based economy, projected over time.

when media employ discourses and give voice to spokespersons that reinforce cultural differences exacerbated by globalization. These observations are relevant to other stable multilingual, multicultural knowledge economies, such as Canada and Switzerland, which like Belgium are sometimes characterized as nationless countries, and which likewise invest huge amounts of public resources in science and technology development (Atkinson-Grosjean, 2006). Communities within these states have developed culturally specific narratives to engage with marketization, globalization, and knowledge production, inviting examination of how science, technology, and collective identities become entangled and are coproduced.

Conclusion

This article explores Flemish and Walloon socioeconomic policy plans (“Flanders in Action” and the Walloon “Marshall Plans”) and mainstream press reporting on those plans (2005–2013) in a Flemish and a Francophone quality daily. The article suggests that policy actors in these newspapers draw on similar transition repertoires, including “Catching up,” to legitimize or discredit policies and actions. The “Catching up” repertoire places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global race toward the KBE, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations and worries that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors, the repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their collective identities in an interdependent KBE constellation.

As we have chosen a limited set of policy documents and press articles from two major quality newspapers, it may well be that we have distinguished only one policy/media discourse rather than a range of such discourses. We hence caution against classifying “Catching up” as a dominant STI-driven repertoire in Flanders and Wallonia, even if our findings suggest that “Catching up” is a discursive resource which various actors recurrently draw on. The “Catching up” repertoire is noteworthy because it reflects Wallonia’s repositioning in the world as a potential KBE player. This repositioning is reflected in *De Standaard*’s news coverage on VIA, as prior to 2009 (before the first evaluation of Wallonia’s first MP), the newspaper hardly took interest in the MP and in Wallonia’s socioeconomic performance. After 2009, we find explicit references to the MPs and explicit comparisons between Flemish and Walloon socioeconomic performance. We also note that “Catching up” is linked to other repertoires, such as “Wallonisation.” The latter has both a pejorative and a more positive connotation, depending on who is talking, to whom the message is addressed, and when it is invoked.

It is equally important to stress that this study does not consider how these repertoires are received and rearticulated by other societal actors, such as scientists and technologists, civil society groups, or the broader “public opinion.” More research is needed to learn the answer to how groups in society respond to specific storylines and symbols. Paraphrasing Fletcher (1998), a research agenda that combines qualitative content analysis with reception analysis to gauge these broader societal trends is not an easy one, but it is important to think along these lines.

A good starting point for such an analysis would be to integrate discourse-analytic concepts such as repertoire into the sociology of expectations and related STS approaches that examine future prospects and promises in innovation (Borup, Brown, Konrad, & Van Lente, 2006). A key notion that springs to mind is “sociotechnical imaginary,” defined by Jasanoff and Kim (2009) as “collectively imagined forms of social life reflected in the design and fulfillment of nation-specific scientific and/or technological projects” (p. 120). Identifying the repertoires that sustain, or conversely, challenge, such broader national imaginaries would give us a better understanding of how science and technology are promoted and questioned by nonscientific actors and institutions, such as the media and the state. Here, discourse analysis can make a tangible contribution to STS studies that explore the relationship between science and technology, governance, and nation building (Felt, 2013; Hecht, 1998; Jasanoff & Kim, 2009) by providing analytical tools and resources that make explicit *how* groups and institutions “make themselves at ease” with the KBE imperatives of knowledge, innovation, and competition (Horst & Irwin, 2010). A fine-grained analysis of this kind would helpfully challenge overly simplistic renditions of the KBE as a homogenizing force that expunges all differences. As Schot and Rip (2010) have argued, rather than assuming that all countries simply go through the same modernization process, we must acknowledge the simultaneity of, and the interplay between, globalizing forces and particularizing tendencies, as nations develop with a global KBE in nation- or region-specific ways. For Belgium this means that whereas in earlier times Flemish and Walloon collective identities were reconfigured within the constellation of the Belgian nation-state, today such reconfigurations must also be understood in relation to the globalizing KBE context.

The observations made in this article invite further reflection on the meaning and place of collective identities in a complex, interdependent world driven by capital flows, knowledge, and technology. Whereas some authors contend that nationality in the traditional, state-linked sense has no place in the present global, interdependent constellation (Habermas, 2012), others insist on the mutual incompatibility of collective identities (e.g., Flemish identity opposes Belgian identity). While there is some truth to each of these outlooks, identities are also multiple, malleable, and messy, as the chaotic complexity of lived reality contrasts with institutionally formulaic identities (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). In complex, culturally diverse countries such as Belgium, nation-state integration and disintegration may well play out simultaneously through the artful interweaving of nationhood (Belgium), regionalism (Flanders and Wallonia), and supranationalism (Europe).

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Catherine Fallon and Claire Lobet-Maris for providing feedback on earlier versions of this paper, and to

the anonymous reviewers and the journal editor for their useful comments. The material this article contains is partly based upon work supported by the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Belgium officially consists of three regions (the Flemish region, the Walloon region, and the Brussels-Capital region) and three language communities (Dutch-speaking, French-speaking, and German-speaking). The Northern, Dutch-speaking region of Flanders comprises the Dutch-speaking community, whereas the Southern region of Wallonia is predominantly French-speaking, but also encompasses the German-speaking community in Eastern Wallonia. The Brussels-Capital region is an essentially French-speaking enclave within the Flemish region.
2. The official names of these plans are Plan Marshall pour la Wallonie and Plan Marshall 2.Vert.
3. In 2015, the Flemish government officially invoked a new policy, Visie 2015 (Vision 2015), as a follow up to VIA.
4. The Pact 2020 succeeds the Pact of Vilvoorde, which was ratified by the Flemish government, the social partners, and environmental organizations on November 22, 2001. It is similar to the Pact of Vilvoorde in terms of scope and aims, and encodes the broad consultation method also found in VIA. Following these Pacts, numerous policy programs and platforms have emerged with the aim of complementing and strengthening the VIA project as a whole, such as Vlaanderen 2020, Accent op Talent, and Richting Morgen, among many others. As these programs are inscribed in, or closely linked to, VIA, we do not expound on them in this article unless the data presented in Section 3 warrant their mentioning.
5. The precise Dutch term used in VIA documentation is “*legislatuuroverschrijdend*,” which can roughly be translated as *exceeding legislatures*.
6. What is meant by “the long term,” however, is open to flexible (and strategic) interpretation, as initially, the Flemish government set as target the year 2010. It subsequently changed this target to 2020 so as to match the EU’s 2020 Lisbon Agenda. While the target year of 2020 still holds today, the year 2050 is also often provided as a reference on government websites.
7. See, for example, *De Standaard*, 10.07.2006; 11.07.2006.
8. *De Standaard*, “Vlaanderen in aanvaring,” 19.02.2011.
9. Several policy observers drew on the leaked e-mail incident to ridicule VIA and the ministers associated with VIA. They did so by drawing on a typical Flemish expression, “The mayonnaise doesn’t stick,” which could be translated as “The chemistry is all wrong.” See, for example, Knack, “Mayonaise,” 22.02.2011; <http://www.knack.be/nieuws/mayonaise/article-opinion-19792.html>
10. This is not to argue that DIRV went uncontested, as the political left and various trade unions opposed Geens’s policy reforms (see Van Oudheusden, Charlier, Roskamp, & Delvenne,

- 2015). The point is that DIRV successfully mobilized Flemings and gave rise to a collective sense of Flemishness.
11. On this account, Billig can be criticized for too strongly insisting on the reproduction of nationalism through routine symbols, language, and the media, whereas nationalism is also contested and transformed through daily practices.
 12. The Flemish and Francophone media in Belgium are concentrated into several media groups. Although print media, audiovisual media, and radio typically tailor to one linguistic community (i.e., the Dutch language and the Francophone communities), the groups are national. *De Standaard* is owned by Mediahuis; *La Libre Belgique* by IPM.
 13. The reason we liken Flemish to *Dutch-speaking*, but do not equate Francophone to *Walloon* has again to do with Belgian's complex institutional organization and multilayered system of government. Whereas Flanders comprises a territorially bound region (officially called the Flemish region), which is populated by Dutch-speaking Flemings in the so-designated Flemish community, the Walloon region was not merged with the French community of Belgium. The Walloon community, which is responsible for language, culture, and education, should hence be distinguished from the Walloon region, which is concerned with economic matters (and which compromises both the French-speaking population of Wallonia and the small German-speaking minority in the East of Belgium). As a consequence, "Flanders" denotes a distinct cultural community with a relatively well-defined territory, whereas "Wallonia" is a looser, less perceptible cultural, and political entity.
 14. For *De Standaard*, we used the search term "Vlaanderen in Actie." For *La Libre*, we used the search query "Plan Marshall" AND "innov*" to avoid retrieving articles on the European recovery plan.
 15. "Ik wil al lang business doen in Vlaanderen. Maar ik zie geen opportuniteiten. Veel te veel regeltjes. Veel te duur ook. De 'can do'-mentaliteit ontbreekt. In de VS duurt het 48 uur om een zaak op te starten. Het kost ook twee keer niets. 1.050 dollar, om precies te zijn. In Vlaanderen ben je al ontmoedigd nog voor je begonnen bent. Er is veel te weinig dynamisme."
 16. "Kijk eens naar de Dirv-actie van twintig jaar geleden, de fameuze Derde Industriële Revolutie in Vlaanderen. Toen had de Vlaamse regering veel minder budget dan nu. Maar welke impact heeft Dirv niet gehad? Toen heerste in Vlaanderen een sfeer van yes, we can. Die sfeer is er nu niet meer. Jammeren over de teloorgang van onze economie zal niet helpen."
 17. "Je veux croire au plan. D'ailleurs, il dit que ses inquiétudes sont plus lourdes pour ce qui est . . . 'à côté du plan: l'éducation et le problème, culturel, des mentalités.' C'est-à-dire? 'On s'est habitué en Wallonie à ne plus savoir sortir d'une logique d'acquis plutôt que de responsabilité.' Une culture du 'qu'est-ce que je reçois?' plutôt que du 'qu'est-ce que j'apporte.' . . . C'est lié à un déclin qui fut très rude."
 18. "Il est faux de dire que la Wallonie n'a rien fait. Mais elle a fait trop peu, pas assez vite, et il reste des choses qu'elle ne fait pas. Je pense surtout à l'apprentissage, au développement de la créativité. Le rapport Pisa est inquiétant. La créativité doit être une priorité."
 19. "Encore un bon point pour la Wallonie en plein essor. Elle est l'une des deux régions invitées d'honneur (avec la Californie) de la conférence mondiale de l'investissement [. . .] Cette belle tribune offerte à la Wallonie est le résultat des diverses actions pour l'installer dans un cercle vertueux de développement."
 20. The MP was evaluated in 2009 by an independent Walloon economic and employment observatory, the Walloon Institute of Assessment, Forecasting and Statistics (IWEPS).
 21. "Et le patron de l'Awex de souligner les capacités d'innovation et de partenariat ouvertes par le plan Marshall 2.vert. Celui dont, justement, Ernst & Young loue les qualités. On en parle même en Flandre, dit Herwig Joosten (E&Y). Le plan Marshall marche mieux que Vlaanderen in Actie. ViA est trop complexe et la base de déduction fiscale pour octroi de brevet pas assez large."
 22. "Le Miracle Wallon ? Pas tout de suite. La Wallonie dépassera la Flandre . . . en 2087. Il faudra 75 ans pour que le PIB/habitant wallon dépasse celui de la Flandre si rien ne change. Pourtant, le gouvernement wallon a mis en œuvre de bonnes politiques."
 23. "Arrêtons de mesurer la Wallonie à la Flandre. Le but du redressement wallon n'est pas d'arriver au même niveau que la Flandre. Le but est le plein-emploi, le retour à la prospérité et d'assumer l'autonomie qui sera la nôtre dans les prochaines années."

ORCID iD

Michiel Van Oudheusden  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3748-0469>

References

- Accaputo, A., Bayenet, B., & Pagano, G. (2006). Le plan Marshall pour la Wallonie. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 14, 5-73. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/revue-courrier-hebdomadaire-du-crisp-2006-14-page-5.htm>
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflection on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London, England: Verso.
- Atkinson-Grosjean, J. (2006). *Public science, private interests: Culture and commerce in Canada's networks of centres of excellence*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. London, England: Sage.
- Borup, M., Brown, N., Konrad, K., & Van Lente, H. (2006). The sociology of expectations in science and technology. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 18, 285-298.
- Claissse, F., & Delvenne, P. (2017). As above, so below? Narrative salience and side effects of national innovation systems. *Critical Policy Studies*, 11, 255-271.
- Deutsch, K. (1966). *Nationalism and social communications*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Felt, U. (2013). *Keeping technologies out: Sociotechnical imaginaries and the formation of a national technopolitical identity*. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.5479&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Fischer, F. (2003). *Reframing public policy: Discursive politics and deliberative practices*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Fletcher, F. J. (1998). Media and political identity: Canada and Quebec in the era of globalization. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 23(3). Retrieved from <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1049/955>
- Goorden, L. (2004). *Innovation policy and technology assessment in Flanders*. Retrieved from http://ist.vito.be/en/pdf/publications/innovation_and_ta_part_2.pdf

- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2001). *Institutional selves: Troubled identities in a postmodern world*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Habermas, J. (2012). *The crisis of the European Union: A response*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Hajer, M. (1995). *The politics of environmental discourse: Ecological modernization and the policy process*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.
- Hajer, M. (2005). Coalitions, practices, and meaning in environmental politics: from acid rain to BSE. In D. Howarth & J. Torfing (Eds.), *Discourse theory in European politics: identity, policy and governance* (pp. 297-315). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hecht, G. (1998). *The radiance of France: Nuclear power and national identity after World War 2*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hewitt, S. (2009). *Discourse analysis and public policy research* (Centre for Rural Economy Discussion Paper Series No. 24). Retrieved from <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/media/wwwnclacuk/centreforruraleconomy/files/discussion-paper-24.pdf>
- Horst, M., & Irwin, A. (2010). Nations at ease with radical knowledge. *Social Studies of Science*, 40, 105-126.
- Jasanoff, S., & Kim, S.-H. (2009). Containing the atom: Sociotechnical imaginaries and nuclear power in the United States and South Korea. *Minerva*, 47, 119-146.
- Jeffrey, C., & O'Sullivan, B. (1994). *The role of socio-economic interest groups vis-à-vis local and regional authorities* (UWE Papers in Politics, No. 4). Bristol, England: University of the West of England.
- Keating, M. (1992). Regional autonomy in the changing state order: A framework for analysis. *Regional Politics and Policy*, 2, 45-61.
- Keller, R. (2005). Analysing discourse: An approach from the sociology of knowledge. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 6(3), 32. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/19/41#g3>
- Kingdon, J. (1995). *Agenda, alternatives and public policy*. Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Lenschow, A., & Sprungk, C. (2010). The myth of a Green Europe. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 48, 133-154.
- Lim, A. (2001). Intelligent island discourse: Singapore's discursive negotiation with technology. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 21, 175-192.
- McKenzie, P. J. (2005). Interpretative repertoires. In K. E. Fisher, S. Erdelez & E. F. Lynne McKechnie (Eds.), *Theories of information behavior* (pp. 221-224). Medford, NJ: Information Today.
- Oosterlynck, S. (2006). *The political economy of regionalism in Belgium: Imagining and institutionalising the Flemish regional economy* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Lancaster University, Lancaster, England.
- Phillips, L., & Jorgensen, M. W. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London, England, Sage.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1995). Discourse analysis. In J. A. Smith, R. Harre', & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 80-92). London, England: Sage.
- Quévit, M. (1978). *The Causes of the Decline of Wallonia*. Brussels, Belgium: Editions Vie Ouvriere.
- Schot, J., & Rip, A. (2010). Inventing the power of modernization. In J. Schot, H. Lintsen, & A. Rip (Eds.), *Technology and the making of the Netherlands: The age of contested modernization, 1890-1970* (pp. 13-46). Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Tuominen, K., Talja, S., & Savolainen, R. (2002). Discourse, cognition, and reality: Toward a social constructionist metatheory for library and information science. In H. Bruce, R. Fidel, P. Ingwersen, & P. Vakkari (Eds.), *Emerging frameworks and methods: Proceedings of the fourth international conference on conceptions of library and information science (CoLIS 4)* (pp. 271-283). Greenwood Village, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- van den Hoonaard, W. (1997). *Working with sensitizing concepts: Analytical field research*. London, England, Sage.
- Van Oudheusden, M., Charlier, N., Roskamp, B., & Delvenne, P. (2015). Broadening, deepening, and governing innovation: Flemish technology assessment in historical and socio-political perspective. *Research Policy*, 44, 1877-1886.
- Versmessen, E., & Delmartino, F. (1998). Decentralization and regional economic development. In B. De Villiers, F. Delmartino, & A. Alen. (Eds.), *Institutional development in divided societies* (pp. 253-298). Pretoria, South Africa: HSRC.
- Vlaamse Raad. (1983a). *Draft Decree: Regarding the budget of the Flemish Community for fiscal year 1983*. Retrieved from <http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1116715>
- Vlaamse Raad. (1983b). *Expenditure budget 1983*. Retrieved from https://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/docs/handelingen_plenaire/1982-1983/plen011-21031983.pdf
- Vlaanderen in Actie. (2006). Retrieved from www.vlaandereninactie.be

Author Biographies

Michiel Van Oudheusden researches the roles of government, industry, academia and civil society in science, technology and innovation governance. He works at the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre and KU Leuven, from where he co-coordinates the Belgian Science, Technology and Society network (BSTS).

Nathan Charlier is a social scientist based at the University of Liège, working at the intersection of public health, integrated care, and program evaluation. In his PhD dissertation (2017) he compared how innovation policies have co-evolved in the regions of Flanders and Wallonia since the 1980s.

Pierre Delvenne is a research associate of the Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS), lecturer at the University of Liège (Department of Political Science), and co-director of SPIRAL Research Centre. He has published extensively in his areas of expertise: Technology Assessment, bioeconomy, and science and technology in societ.